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TIN BACKGROUND BRIEFING PAPER

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TORTURE IN TIBET

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TORTURE IN TIBET: THE EVIDENCE MOUNTS

As reported by Reuters, November 1st, human rights activists who have visited Tibet in recent months have collected detailed evidence of the systematic torture of political detainees inside prisons in Tibet.

The actual evidence, mostly consisting of taped interviews, is in the possession of the Tibet Support Group, London. The material analysed so far shows that seven of the first eight prisoners questioned after their release from prisons near Lhasa this summer were tortured.

They describe in detail the use of electric shock treatment, suspension from the ceiling, immersion in water, prolonged periods of standing, and systematic beatings. Evidence from a further 20 prisoners which is still being analysed supports this consistent picture of physical abuse.

One lay dissident says he was stripped naked and forced to inhale smoke and fumes. Two others report that electric batons were applied to the mouth during interrogation: "At the same time that they were asking the questions, they were beating me. I was made to take my shoes off and electric batons were placed on my feet and also in my mouth".

Another says, "They punched my stomach quite frequently during interrogation. One night they made me stand outside without sleep. It was very cold." A nun held in solitary for several months says, "I was made to stand by the wall. They slapped my face until it was swollen. Then they set a dog on me. They gave orders in Chinese to the dog." On another occasion, she says, "My hands were tied behind me and I was beaten by five guards ... I was made to stand on a table while two guards held my hands ... they beat me all the time ... when I became unconscious they poured cold water over me ... when I said I didn't feel well they beat me again."

Two prisoners were shown others suspended from a beam by ropes tied to their arms lashed behind their backs - a routine torture in Chinese prisons, called by Tibetans 'the flying aeroplane', lasting from a few hours to a few days.

Conditions in the prisons of Sangyip, Gutsa and Drapchi are described as particularly bad. "At Sangyip, we were kept in a small cell. My hands and feet were shackled for three days. There were no lights in the cell; the cell was totally bare. We were not provided with a mattress or a blanket. We were sleeping on a cement floor. I was kept like this because I refused to give the names of other people who took part in the demonstration".

Speaking to other prisoners was generally forbidden. Visitors were not allowed and food was never more than 5 'momos' or dumplings a day.

Several of the prisoners name the principal torturers as Shobi, a 28 year old policeman, and another called Lhatse, "who not only beat the prisoners nearly to death but then trampled on them".

An analysis of the first seven interviews is enclosed. Full transcripts are available on request. Translation proceeds as further evidence arrives.

CHANNEL 4 FILM TO REVEAL IDENTITY OF SOURCES

TSG-UK feels grave concern at Channel 4's determination to show the faces of at least 4 of the Tibetans interviewed in its forthcoming film on Tibet to be shown at 8.30, November 9th.

The film is the first ever to give detailed evidence of conditions in present day Tibet and TSG congratulates Channel 4 on its pioneering initiative in breaking the silence on this long ignored issue.

But despite representations from the TSG and the concern expressed by Tibetans in this country, several of whom* have disassociated themselves from this film because of this issue, Channel 4 has so far declined to conceal the faces of 4 nuns who describe tortures inflicted on them in prison.

Channel 4 says the nuns gave verbal permission to the reporter, but it remains unclear why it has chosen to expose them to the certainty of further imprisonment and even the possibility of execution should the Chinese authorities recognise them from the film. At least one Tibetan - Yulu Dawa Tsering, 53 - has been in prison since December simply for talking privately about politics to a visiting Italian in Lhasa last July.

The TSG hopes that Channel 4 will change its decision and save these people from further suffering. In any event it calls on concerned bodies everywhere to do their utmost to ensure that interviewees are not victimised for their participation in the film.

Further details from: Robbie Barnett - 249 9240

*INCLUDING PHUNTSOG WANGYAL, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF DALAI LAMA IN EUROPE.

LHASA INTERVIEWS 1988: ANALYSIS OF 7.

ANALYSIS OF LHASA INTERVIEWS WITH RELEASED PRISONERS 1988

No. of interview in Summary First line of transcript	2 "My name is ... 26 yr old"	3 "I was arrested"	4 "I became a monk"	5 "Tomchi is a shop"	7 LHA/5 "How long were the cell?"	8 LHA/6 "What's your name?"	9 "44 yrs old"
Reason for arrest: political activity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes *2	Yes
Formally charged or tried or sentenced	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Civil status: Monk / Nun / Lay person	Monk	Lay	Lay	Lay	Nun	Lay	Monk
Name of Prison	Sangyip	(a) Sangyup; (b) Gutsa	Gutsa	Gutsa	—	Gutsa / Drapchi	'No. 9'
No. of months in Prison	3	1/2 ; 4	4	4	—	4	4
CONDITIONS							
No. of prisoners in the interviewee's cell (inclusive)	3	7 ; 10	7	9	1	4	1
No. of mattresses per prisoner	—	0 ; 1/10	1/7	1/2	1/1 *2	1/2	—
No. of blankets per prisoner	—	0 ; 1/10	—	1/1 *3	1/1 *2	0 (at first) 1/1 (later)	—
Prisoners had to share mattress if any	—	Yes ; Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	—
Amount of Food / Was it sufficient?	No	No ; 5 rolls *4	5 rolls	—	2 rolls	5 rolls	No
Was extra food received from relatives/friends?	Yes	— ; —	No	No	Yes	No	—
Forced to sleep with lights on	—	No lights ; —	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	—
Allowed to receive visitors	—	— ; —	—	No	No	Yes	—
Allowed to speak freely to others	No	— ; —	No	No	No *2	No	— *2
Medical treatment sufficient	No	No ; No	No	—	No	No	—
Sometimes shackled or tied	No	Yes ; —	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
TORTURE / Beatings							
Beaten	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tortured	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alleges that others were tortured	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hit with sticks	No	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
Hit with rifle / pistol butts	No	Yes	—	—	Yes	Yes	—
Hit with iron rod	No	Yes	Yes	—	—	—	—
Hit or shocked with electric baton	No	Yes *5	Yes *5	Yes	Yes	—	Yes
Alleges that others were hit with baton or given shocks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
Alleges people were left hanging from ceiling	—	Yes	Yes *6	Yes *6	—	Yes	—
Made to stand for long periods	No	—	Yes	Yes	—	Yes	—
Other forms of punishment	No	Fake execution	Lying down	—	Water Dogs Lying Down ~~Stripped~~	Water Smoke Stripped	—
POLITICS							
Opposed to Chinese rule/presence	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	Yes
Declares support Dalai Lama	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes
Expects more disturbances	Yes	—	—	Yes	—	—	—
Political threats or intimidation applied	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	—

Notes:

- A dash (—) indicates no information available.
- All accounts are of prisoner's own experience except where I have written "alleges".
- All interviews took place in Tibetan in Aug/Sept 1988.

*1 Prisoner also accused of attacking soldier with knife

*2 Note these prisoners were held in solitary

*3 Note 1 of prisoners in this cell were common criminals & therefore allegedly better treated

*4 Unclear whether these rolls (mo-mo) were with meat or plain

*5 Given electric shock treatment in ion month

*6 Saw others suspended from ceiling

Further details:
Robbie BACNETT.